Headline Statistics

➢ This year in the UK, nearly 40,000 children and young people will enter the care system. That’s 109 every day.

➢ There are currently around 95,000 children in the UK who are classified as looked-after away from home. An increase of 3% from the previous year.

➢ More than 65,000 children live with almost 55,000 foster families across the UK.

➢ The UK urgently needs 8,100 more foster families to meet the need.

➢ At 30 September 2018, there were 2730 children waiting for adoption in England. 41% of these had been waiting eighteen months or more.

Care-leavers

Around 9,000 young people in England age out of the care system every year.

Only 6% of care leavers aged 19-21 go on to higher education.

Care experienced young people in England:

Make up 25% of the homeless population

Make up almost half of men under 21 in contact with the criminal justice

Are three times more likely to be not in education, employment or training
England: Executive Summary

- There are 75,000 looked after children.¹
- The number of children starting to be looked after (32,050) has fallen by 3% from 2017 (32,940).²
- 56% of looked after children are male and 44% are female.³
- Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children make up 6% of the looked after children population.⁴
- 11% of children ceased to be looked with a special guardianship order.⁵

Fostering

- 73% of looked after children are in foster placements.⁶
- It is estimated that a further 6,800 foster families need to be recruited over the next year.⁷
- Over the past year, 10% of fostered children have had three or more placements.⁸

Adoption

- 3,820 children ceased to be looked after due to adoption, a 13% decrease from the previous year.⁹
- The average age of adoption is 3 years and 3 months.¹⁰
- The number of looked after children with a placement order for adoption has fallen by 44% since 2014.¹¹

Reason for becoming looked after¹²:
- 63% Abuse or neglect
- 15% Family dysfunction
- 8% Family being in acute stress
- 6% Absent parenting
- 8% Other

Ethnicity of looked after children¹³:
- 75% White
- 9% Mixed
- 7% Black or black British
- 5% Asian or Asian British
- 3% Other ethnic groups, including Chinese

Care Leavers and care-experienced young people

- Nearly half of all young men (21 and under) in custody have experience of the care system.¹⁴
- One third of care leavers become homeless within the first two years of leaving care¹⁵ and 25% of homeless people are care-experienced.¹⁶
- 39% of care leavers aged 19-21 were NEET* compared to 12% of all 19-21 year olds.¹⁷
- 26% of 19 and 20-year olds continue to live with their former foster carers through ‘Staying Put’ despite ceasing to be looked after on their 18th birthday, a marginal increase on 2017.¹⁸

*(not in education, training or employment)
Scotland: Executive Summary

Please note: A child classified as ‘looked after’ in Scotland includes all children looked after by a local authority, including some who remain living at home with their parents. Scotland is unique in this compared to the other UK nations.

- There are around 11,000 looked after* children.¹
- Just under 14% of all looked after* children are cared for in residential settings.²

**Fostering**

- Approximately 50% of looked after* children live with foster families.³
- 38% of all looked after* children live with kinship carers.⁴
- It is estimated that a further 550 more foster families are needed.⁵
- 5% of all looked after children experience three or more placement changes every year.⁶

**Adoption**

- Of children who cease to be looked after, around 7% go on to be adopted.⁷
- 68% of children who are adopted are under the age of five.⁸
- At 31 March 2019, there were 151 children and 125 adopters waiting to be matched on Scotland’s Adoption Register.⁹

**Ethnicity of looked after children:**

This is no longer collected as national data.

**Care leavers and care experienced young people**

- One third of young offenders and almost one third of the adult prison population self-identify as care-experienced.¹⁰
- Only 16% of school leavers who have been in care for the entirety of their final year have one qualification at Level 6 or better.¹¹
- Between 30-50% of the homeless population are care experienced.¹²
- 28% of young people leave care without a formal ‘pathway’ plan for their next steps.¹³
- Of young people leaving care eligible for aftercare services, 38% did not receive any.¹⁴

*For the purposes of comparison with other UK nations, ‘looked after’ here refers to children looked after away from their home or parents.
Wales: Executive Summary

- **6,400** children are classified as looked after, an increase of **8%** from the previous year.¹
- **10%** of looked after children had three or more placements over the past year.²

**Fostering**

- **74%** of looked after children are accommodated in foster care placements.³
- It is estimated that fostering services need to recruit a further **550** foster families.⁴

**Adoption**

- **308** children were adopted in 2017-18 – an **7%** decrease on the previous year.⁵
- **8%** of children were adopted by their former foster carer, a proportion that has fallen steadily over the past ten years.⁶
- As of 31 March 2018, **350** children subject to a placement order were waiting to be matched with a family.⁷

**Reason for becoming looked-after⁸:**

- **64%** Abuse or neglect
- **24%** Family in acute stress or dysfunction
- **7%** Parental illness, disability or absence
- **4%** Socially unacceptable behaviour
- **2%** Other

**Ethnicity of looked after children⁹:**

- **92%** White
- **3%** Mixed Ethnicity
- **2%** Asian or Asian British
- **1%** Black or Black British
- **1%** Other

**Care leavers and care experienced young people**

- **51%** of care leavers are in education, training or employment at 12 months after leaving care.¹⁰
- Between **20-30%** of the young homeless population are care experienced.¹¹
- **23%** of children leaving care aged 16 or over have no formal qualifications, vocational or otherwise.¹²
- **25%** of adult prisoners are care experienced and 14% of young women leaving care are pregnant or already a Mother.¹³
Northern Ireland: Executive Summary

- There are **3100** children classified as looked after, a **4%** increase on last year.\(^1\)
- **5%** of looked after children live in residential care.\(^2\)
- Just under **10%** of children have been Looked After for ten years or longer.\(^3\)

**Fostering**

- **79%** of looked after children are in foster placements.\(^4\)
- It is estimated that **200** more foster families need to be recruited.\(^5\)
- Around **two fifths** of children in foster care are in a kinship placement.\(^6\)

**Adoption**

- **11%** of those leaving care are adopted.\(^7\)
- Children wait on average, **3 years 2 months** to be adopted.\(^8\)
- **9%** of those leaving care go to live with their former foster carers via the ‘Going the Extra Mile’ (GEM) Scheme.\(^9\)

**Ethnicity of looked after children\(^10\):**

- **94%** White
- **6%** Other ethnicities including mixed race, Irish/Roma Travellers, Black, Chinese and Pakistani

**Care leavers and care experienced young people**

- **33%** of children leaving care have no qualifications.\(^11\)
- **26%** of care leavers aged 16-18 have 5 GCSEs (A*-C) or higher, compared to **82%** of school leavers as a whole.\(^12\)
- **1 in 4** care leavers aged 16-18 had a statement of special educational needs.\(^13\)
- **39%** of care leavers aged 19 were NEET*.\(^14\)
- **12%** of all care leavers aged 19 were parents.\(^15\)

*(not in education, employment or training)*
Global: Executive Summary

Orphanages

- There are between **2.7 and 8 million** children residing in orphanages globally.\(^1\),\(^2\)
- On average, **80%** of children living in orphanages have at least one living parent.\(^3\)

The following statistics are based on reports carried out in one location:

- **1 in 3** children exiting residential care institutions becomes homeless.\(^4\)
- **1 in 5** children exiting residential care institutions gains a criminal record.\(^5\)
- **1 in 10** children exiting residential care institutions commits suicide.\(^6\)
- In Australia, **36%** of Christian churches and **51%** of individual church attendees were found to support overseas residential care institutions.\(^7\),\(^8\)

UASC (Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children)

- During 2017, **172,362** people arrived in Europe via sea: just under half were women and children.\(^1\)
- **92%** of the **15,140** children who crossed the central Mediterranean between January and September 2017 were alone.\(^2\)
- In 2017, Britain received just **3%** of all asylum applications in the EU.\(^3\)
References: Headline Statistics

(1) England (32,050) Children looked after in England (including adoption) 2017-18
   Scotland (4063) Children’s Social Work Statistics Scotland, 2017-18
   Northern Ireland (848) Children’s Social Care Statistics for Northern Ireland 2017/18
   Wales (2162) Children looked after by local authorities, 2017-18
   TOTAL = 39,123

(2) Total is 95,856 based on published statistics for looked-after children:
   England (75,420) Children looked after in England (including adoption) 2017-18
   Scotland (10,920) Children’s Social Work Statistics Scotland, 2017-18
   Wales (6407) Children looked after by local authorities, 2017-18
   Northern Ireland (3109) Children’s Social Care Statistics 2017/18

(3) Total average is 3%. Total number of looked after children across UK in 2016-17 was 92,900. This year is 95,856.


(7) Table D1: Children looked after in England (including adoption) year ending 31 March 2018; Department for Education

(8) Children looked after in England (including adoption) 2017-18; Department for Education

(9) Care Leavers: engaging for solutions (2016) National Audit Office

References: England

Statistics based largely on publications up to 31 March 2018

(1) – (6) Children looked after in England (including adoption), year ending 31 March 2018; Department for Education


(8) – (13) Children looked after in England (including adoption), year ending 31 March 2018; Department for Education
Increasing the Number of Care Leavers in ‘Settled, Safe Accommodation (2010) M. Stein and M. Morris


Children looked after in England (including adoption), year ending 31 March 2018; Department for Education

References: Scotland

Statistics based largely on publications up to 31 July 2018

(1) - (4) Children’s Social Work Statistics Scotland, 2017-18; Scottish Government


(6) - (8) Children’s Social Work Statistics Scotland, 2017-18; Scottish Government

(9) Adoption Statistics and Annual Reports; Scotland’s Adoption Register; Available at: http://www.scottlandsadoptionregister.org.uk/adoption-statistics-annual-reports/ [Accessed April 2019]


(11) Education Outcomes for Looked After Children 2016/17 (Published June 2018) Scottish Government


(13) (14) Children’s Social Work Statistics Scotland, 2017-18; Scottish Government

References: Wales

Statistics based largely on publications up to 31 March 2018

(1) (2) (3) Experimental Statistics: Children looked after by local authorities, 2017-18; Welsh Government


(5) (6) Experimental Statistics: Children looked after by local authorities, 2017-18; Welsh Government

(7) Annual Report 2017-18, National Adoption Service

(8) Experimental Statistics: Children looked after by local authorities, 2017-18; Welsh Government

(9) Children looked after at 31 March 2017 by local authority and ethnicity; Welsh Government [online]

(10) Quantitative social services performance measures – Children and Care Leavers (2017-18) StatsWales

(11) Provision for Young Care Leavers at Risk of Homelessness (2015) PPIW Report

(12) Children aged 16 and over ceasing to be looked after during year ending 31 March 2016 by local authority, qualifications and measure; Welsh Government

(13) Care experienced children and young people (2018) National Assembly for Wales, Public Accounts Committee
References: Northern Ireland

Statistics based largely on publications up to 31 March 2018

(1) - (4) Children’s Social Care Statistics for Northern Ireland 2017/18; Department of Health

(5) Fostering Statistics; The Fostering Network [Accessed September 2018]

(6) (7) Children’s Social Care Statistics for Northern Ireland 2017/18; Department of Health

(8) Children adopted from Care in Northern Ireland 2017-18; Department of Health

(9) (10) Children’s Social Care Statistics for Northern Ireland 2017/18; Department of Health

(11) - (15) Northern Ireland Care Leavers 2016/17; Department of Health

References: Global

Orphanages


UASC (Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children)

(1) Immigration Statistics, July to September 2017; Home Office


(3) Immigration Statistics, July to September 2017; Home Office